WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method of accessing data at a server computer from a client computer connected via a network, the data being stored on a data storage device connected to the server computer, the method comprising the steps of:

at the server computer,

receiving a request for data from the client computer;

determining whether the client computer can access the data in its stored form;

when it is determined that the client computer cannot access the data in its stored form, converting the data into a form that the client computer can access; and

returning a locator to the client computer for locating the converted data.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of receiving a request further comprises the step of receiving a URL command.

3. The method of claim 2, wherein the URL command specifies a file identifier for a file containing the data and a file format for the file.

4. The method of claim 3, before the step of retrieving the file, further comprising the step of determining whether the file identifier is valid.

5. The method of claim 4, wherein the step of determining further comprises the step of comparing the file format specified by the URL command to a file extension of the stored file.

6. The method of claim 5, wherein the step of converting further comprises the step of converting the retrieved file to the file format specified by the URL command.

7. The method of claim 1, further comprising the steps of:

storing the converted data at the server computer; and

generating a path name to locate the converted data.

8. The method of claim 7, wherein the locator comprises the path name.

9. The method of claim 7, wherein the client computer has a Web browser, and further comprising the step of, under control of the Web browser, retrieving the converted data from the server computer using the generated path name.

10. An apparatus for accessing data from a server computer, comprising:

a server computer having a data storage device connected thereto, wherein the data storage device stores data;

a client computer connected to the server computer; and

one or more computer programs, performed by the server computer via a network, for receiving a request for data from the client computer, determining whether the client computer can access the data in its stored form, when it is determined that the client computer cannot access the data in its stored form, converting the data into a form that the client computer can access, and returning a locator to the client computer for locating the converted data.

11. The apparatus of claim 10, wherein the means for receiving a request further comprises means for receiving a URL command.

12. The apparatus of claim 11, wherein the URL command specifies a file identifier for a file containing the data and a file format for the file.

13. The apparatus of claim 12, further comprising means for determining whether the file identifier is valid.

14. The apparatus of claim 13, wherein the means for determining further comprises means for comparing the file format specified by the URL command to a file extension of the file.

15. The apparatus of claim 14, wherein the means for converting further comprises means for converting the retrieved file to the file format specified by the URL command.

16. The apparatus of claim 10, further comprising:

means for storing the converted data at the server computer; and

means for generating a path name to locate the converted data.

17. The apparatus of claim 16, wherein the locator comprises the path name.

18. The apparatus of claim 17, wherein the client computer has a Web browser, and further comprising means for, under control of the Web browser, retrieving the converted data from the server computer using the generated path name.

19. An article of manufacture comprising a computer program carrier readable by a client computer and embodying one or more instructions executable by the client computer to perform method steps for accessing data at a server computer from a client computer connected to the server computer via a network, the data being stored in a data storage device connected to the server computer, the method comprising the steps of:

at the server computer,

receiving a request for data from the client computer;

determining whether the client computer can access the data in its stored form;

when it is determined that the client computer cannot access the data in its stored form, converting the data into a form that the client computer can access; and

returning a locator to the client computer for locating the converted data.

20. The article of manufacture of claim 1, wherein the step of receiving a request further comprises the step of receiving a URL command.

21. The article of manufacture of claim 20, wherein the URL command specifies a file identifier for a file containing the data and a file format for the file.

22. The article of manufacture of claim 21, before the step of retrieving the file, further comprising the step of determining whether the file identifier is valid.

23. The article of manufacture of claim 22, wherein the step of determining further comprises the step of comparing the file format specified by the URL command to a file extension of the stored file.

24. The article of manufacture of claim 23, wherein the step of converting further comprises the step of converting the retrieved file to the file format specified by the URL command.

25. The article of manufacture of claim 19, further comprising the steps of:

storing the converted data at the server computer; and

generating a path name to locate the converted data.

26. The article of manufacture of claim 25, wherein the locator comprises the path name.

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27. The article of manufacture of claim 26, wherein the client computer has a Web browser, and further comprising the step of, under control of the Web browser, retrieving the converted data from the server computer using the generated path name.

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